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*The Challenge
of
The Middle East Today*

by

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The Challenge of the Middle East Today

It is always a privilege to have the opportunity of participating in the World Mission Conference at Montreat. I am not here as an expert on the Middle East or the missionary enterprise. Rather am I here because I visited the Middle East last year and saw the Church in action there. My primary purpose in making this trip was to prepare myself better for my teaching responsibilities in the field of Old Testament by visiting archaeological sites and museums in Bible Lands. As a secondary purpose, I wanted to see missionaries in action. As it turned out, I found that my contacts with missionaries were one of the most significant aspects of my experience.

The Middle East is of crucial importance for all of us as churchmen and as Christian citizens. Our lives, the lives of our children, and the life of the Church will in part depend upon what happens in the Middle East today.

The sources of this address are several: my study of the Bible and the Middle East through the years; the trip of which I have spoken, in company with two of my students; my conversations with missionaries, government officials, educators, and the people of the land; and the reading of recent publications on the Middle East.

Some of the issues with which we shall be dealing are highly controversial. Some of you may disagree with some of my positions. This is your privilege. But, please grant me the privilege to reach my own conclusions to the best of my ability. I am altogether unconcerned with party politics in what I have to say, but I am very concerned about politics. The fact of the matter is that the Bible itself gives tremendous attention to national and international affairs. To neglect to deal with such affairs as Christians in our time is to deny our Biblical heritage at this point. From the point of view of American Protestants, Church and State must be kept separate, and with this viewpoint I am in full sympathy. This does not mean, however, that our religion can rightly be separated from politics. If we attempt to keep God out of politics, we deny his Lordship and incur his judgment. Either he is Lord of all or not Lord at all. It is God who creates nations and destroys them. He is the Creator of the universe and the Lord of history. Before him "the nations are like a drop

from a bucket" (Isa. 40:15). This does not mean that God is unconcerned about them, but that he rules and overrules in their affairs. He is no respecter of persons, nations, or denominations; all of us stand under his judgment and mercy. He is at work in the Middle East today.

The People of the Middle East

We first take a look at the people of the Middle East. They are fascinating. There are Arabs, Persians, Turks, Copts, Armenians, Jews, Greeks, Ethiopians, and many others. They speak many different languages. In the Arab world, Arabic is dominant. In Turkey, Turkish. In Iran, Persian. In Israel, Hebrew. However, many people everywhere speak English and French.

There is great variety in dress and food. In Alexandria, Egypt, for example, you can see women in the traditional dress, sometimes including veil, and at the same time, other women in swimming in modern bathing suits. You can buy an ear of corn roasted on coals as you walk along the street, or you can dine in a modern restaurant or hotel. Outside Luxor you can see men make sun-dried brick as in Biblical days, or you can visit a kiln in which brick are made for modern buildings. You can see those who are miserably poor and some who are relatively well-to-do. In some countries there are many beggars. We often saw women with babies in their arms, pleading for *baksheesh*.

We found the people in the countries we visited most friendly. These countries include Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Israel, and Turkey. Time would fail me to give many illustrations of friendliness. Therefore, a few will have to suffice. In Cairo, Egypt, the Department of Antiquities gave us written permission to visit all archaeological sites and remains in Upper Egypt free of charge, and written permission to take all the pictures of any kind which we wished to take of Egyptian Antiquities in Upper Egypt, all because I was a professor back home. Throughout the countries we visited, we were allowed to take the pictures we wanted in almost every instance.

During our visit to Lebanon, the Rev. Edwin Hanna, missionary son of Dr. and Mrs. C. Morton Hanna of the Louisville Seminary, took us on a round of missionary visitation in Jibrail. We visited in both Christian and Muslim homes and found the people very friendly in each case. We were always served some kind of refreshment: bread, grapes, or coffee.

We were in Damascus, Syria, at the time of the International Trade Fair; and although this was the same time at which our own government and the Syrian government were having serious disagreements, we were told that we did not need tickets to the Fair. Our United States passports were the only tickets we needed.

When we were leaving Jerusalem, Jordan, by way of the Mandelbaum Gate, the Jordanian customs officials gave us a warm handshake and told us goodbye. We walked across No Man's Land and were welcomed warmly by the Israeli customs officials, who called a taxi to take us to the YMCA in Jerusalem, Israel. During our stay in Israel we visited the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Through a fortunate circumstance I was introduced to President Mazar, who made it possible for us not only to see the Dead Sea Scrolls of the University but to see them with the help of Professor Avigad, a specialist in the subject, and to take all the pictures of them we might desire. Professor Avigad gave us letters of introduction to persons in charge of certain archaeological museums and sites in Israel to facilitate our study.

The hospitality and graciousness described in the above illustrations could be duplicated many times in all the countries we visited.

The Political Situation

We now look at the political situation in the Middle East by considering Nationalism, Zionism, Communism, and the Role of the West. The Arabs were subjected to the Turks, British, and French for years and desired independence. During World War I they were wooed by Britain and promised independence in exchange for aid against Turkey. The Arabs revolted against Turkey in 1916 and helped the Allies win the victory. In the same year Britain and France made the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement (later approved by Tsarist Russia) which divided the former Ottoman lands into spheres of influence. The Agreement left only a part of the Arab world free.

The story of the persecution of the Jews in Europe, the move to establish a National Home for the Jewish people in Palestine, the Balfour Declaration, and the establishment of the State of Israel, are all a part of this account too, but will be dealt with more fully presently. The establishment of Israel resulted in 800,000 Arab refugees, increased bitter hostility between the Arabs and Israelis, and created Jewish refugees from Arab countries. The number of Arab refugees has now increased to over 900,000.

It is difficult for those of us who live so far from the Middle East to grasp the feeling of intense hatred which the Arabs have for Israel.

We were acutely aware of this hostility throughout all our travels in both the Arab world and Israel. Technically, one is not supposed to be able to travel from Israel into any country of the Arab world on account of the prohibition by the Arab countries. A missionary told us that a person reading the Bible in a public meeting in at least some places in the Arab world would substitute "the people of God" or a similar expression for the word "Israel" on account of the emotional identification with the modern State of Israel.

Egypt has been playing a leading part in the development of Pan-Arabism. She requested financial aid from the United States for the purpose of building the Aswan Dam. At first our country was friendly toward the proposal; but for a combination of reasons we refused the loan. This was followed by the Suez crisis and further loss of Western influence in the Middle East. After the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Mr. Nasser became the symbol of independence to the Arab world. Most of the Arab people have had a cultural and religious bond in Islam, but they also have a tie in their common desire to take part in world affairs. The union of Egypt and Syria is indicative of Pan-Arabism. At the same time the Arab world is by no means fully united; it is characterized by strong political divisions within nations and between nations. Mr. Nasser is loved by his own people and by many in at least some of the other Arab countries. His picture is displayed in countries other than Egypt, though not as frequently. At least some Egyptians feel that the United States is pushing Egypt into the arms of Russia.

We cannot understand the Middle East without a careful look at Zionism. Zionism is "a movement for colonizing Jews in Palestine, either for religious or nationalizing purposes." Throughout the centuries many Jews have considered themselves to be living in exile from their homeland. They have been reminded of this constantly through their liturgy. There have been cultural Zionists and political Zionists. Cultural Zionists have supported the establishment of a Jewish cultural center in Palestine, whereas political Zionists have supported the establishment of a Jewish political State. Cultural Zionism was already a reality in Palestine before the modern State of Israel was established.

In modern times Zionism has been stimulated by anti-Semitism, though anti-Semitism goes back into pre-Christian history (see the Book of Esther). Some attention from time to time has been given to the settling of Jewish refugees in places other than Palestine, but Palestine has always been the main objective of many Jews. Theodor

Herzl is usually regarded as the father of modern Zionism, though he had forerunners. The trial of Captain Alfred Dreyfus was the immediate occasion for Herzl to seek a solution to the persecution of the Jews in Europe. Dreyfus was a Jew who had risen to the rank of Captain in the French army. He was arrested, tried, and condemned on the charge of having sold French military secrets to the German government. In 1895 he was degraded and sent to prison on Devil's Island as a mob shouted "Death to the Jews!" There were those who came to his rescue at tremendous danger to themselves and exposed the real spy. After having suffered in prison for several years, Dreyfus was set free, declared innocent, and restored to a place in the French army with the rank of Major. But in spite of the persecution of Jews in Europe, symbolized in the Dreyfus' case, Herzl died a disappointed man, for his movement received strong opposition from within Judaism itself. Nevertheless, the movement did not die.

Fresh stimulus was given to Zionism by the Balfour Declaration, a part of a letter written by Arthur James Balfour, Britain's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, November 2, 1917:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil or religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the right and political status enjoyed by the Jews in any other country.

Many Jews did enter Palestine. After World War I Palestine was placed under British mandate. Under Nazi persecution an estimated six million Jews in Europe lost their lives. Russia and the Western nations received some refugees, and Palestine was permitted to receive others, but many lost their lives.

In 1945 President Roosevelt met with King Ibn Saud of central Arabia, the father of the present king of Saudi Arabia, to discuss the problem of Jewish refugees. Ibn Saud said: "Give them [that is, the Jews] and their descendants the choicest lands and homes of the Germans who had oppressed them." Mr. Roosevelt gave Ibn Saud two assurances, which I quote from Colonel William A. Eddy, Mr. Roosevelt's interpreter on that occasion: "(1) He personally, as president, would never do anything which might prove hostile to the Arabs; and (2) the U. S. Government would make no change in its basic policy in Palestine without full and prior consultation with both Jews and Arabs." Mr. Roosevelt was dead in eight weeks. In the same year

four U. S. Ministers to Arab countries were brought before President Truman, and one of them presented orally an agreed statement in about twenty minutes. After a little discussion Mr. Truman said: "I'm sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents." (The information in this paragraph in substance may be found in several sources, notably, William A. Eddy's *FDR Meets Ibn Saud*, American Friends of the Middle East, Inc., New York, 1954.)

The British mandate had not worked well. Therefore, in 1947 Britain put the Palestine problem in the hands of the United Nations. United Nations recommended that Palestine be divided into Jewish and Arab states, and that Jerusalem be internationalized, but United Nations did not provide the means for enforcing the recommendation. The Arabs maintained that the United Nations had no right to divide territory which belonged to the Arabs. They also maintained that it was unjust for the consequences of the sins of "Christian" nations against the Jews to be forced on the Arabs. Among Jewish leaders who felt that the best solution of the Palestine problem did not lie in the creation of a Jewish state, was Dr. Judah L. Magnes, the first president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Great Britain did not want to enforce any recommendation that did not meet with the approval of both Jews and Arabs and announced that she would give up the mandate on May 15, 1948. On May 14, 1948, Israel was proclaimed a republic by the Israelis. War between Israelis and Arabs followed, and Jerusalem as well as Palestine was thereby divided. The Arabs bitterly opposed any division of the land.

Almost immediately after the proclamation of Israel, the United States gave *de facto* recognition and Russia gave full recognition. On January 29, 1949, Great Britain granted *de facto* recognition and two days later the United States granted *de jure* recognition. On April 27, 1950, Great Britain granted *de jure* recognition also. In the Israeli-Arab conflict Israel added considerable territory to that which had been recommended by United Nations. Many Jews in the United States today are supporting Israel financially whether they regard themselves as Zionists or not. A minority of American Jews are opposed to Zionism. At the present time Israel is far stronger than her Arab neighbors in military power. She has profited by the know-how of European refugees and is working hard to become financially independent. However, she is surrounded by hostile nations which she knows will not always be militarily weak.

When Pan-Arab nationalism and political Zionism are studied side by side, it is not difficult to see some of the tremendous problems which require skill and devotion to solve. But there are those who say they can be solved. I know of four concrete proposals for settling the Arab-Israeli controversy. Three of these I heard in person and one I read in a report. Although they were not identical, they were sufficiently similar to inspire hope of a genuine solution to the problem. I firmly believe that this problem can be settled if our government will take seriously the suggestions which are made and take the lead in making a concrete proposal to the other nations. The solution of this problem would make all other Middle Eastern problems easier to solve. For the sake of Arabs, Israelis, and the whole world I devoutly pray for its early solution.

Communism is a real threat in the Middle East. It is a universally known fact that communists are trying to win the entire world to the communist line. However, it should be recognized that the revolution in the Middle East did not begin under communist auspices. In a way, it has been in process since 1798 when Napoleon visited Egypt. Furthermore, Christian missions have been an awakening influence. But Russia with the aid of communists in the Middle Eastern countries themselves is trying to turn the revolutionary spirit into communistic channels. How far she succeeds is going to depend in no small degree on how well the United States handles her opportunities. Unfortunately, some people in the Middle East do not seem to realize the horrible danger for them from communism. The communists dwell on the theme of Western imperialism. Russia has wanted access to warm water ports for a long time. The Middle East has many warm water ports. The Middle East supplies Western Europe with most of its oil. Russia knows that if she had control of that oil supply, she would exercise greater influence in Europe. The Middle East has always been a bridge between Europe and the Far East and between Europe and Africa. If Russia should get control of this bridge, she would lose no time in trying to enslave Africa. The crisis through which we are passing is far more crucial than many Americans realize.

The West has played a significant role in the Middle East for a long time. This has been especially true of Britain and France. These two countries did some constructive things in their administration of certain of these lands, but they have lost most of their former prestige and influence. The United States is still highly regarded but with some reservation. On the basis of what I heard by the grapevine, Point 4 has been a blessing in some cases but not an unmixed blessing

in others. The way the program is administered has much to do with its effectiveness. We need to devise increasingly effective means for helping these people to help themselves, so as not to cultivate an unhealthy sense of dependence. Iran and Turkey, though a part of the Muslim world, are not a part of the Arab world. At the present moment they are more friendly to the United States than some of the Arab countries are.

Although I am well aware that we cannot identify the Kingdom of God with democracy, I am also convinced that I prefer living in a democracy to living under a dictatorship. The countries of the Middle East do not yet have an altogether solid foundation for real democracy. Democracy is not the type of thing that can be put on a silver platter and offered to a nation with the words, "Have some." The foundation must be laid for the superstructure. This foundation includes: (1) the ordinary man's participation in community affairs; (2) the ability to read and write; (3) the dissemination of public information on national issues; (4) a measure of economic freedom where voting cannot be coerced; and (5) widespread moral and spiritual integrity. The degree to which each of these elements is present varies from country to country. Here I want to pose a question and leave it as a question: Is it possible for democracy to continue in any nation where the Christian gospel is not widely known and practiced?

The Religious Situation

This leads us into a brief consideration of the religious situation in the Middle East. There are several branches of the Ancient Church which have been there through many centuries. One major division of the Ancient Church is known as the Eastern Orthodox, which is composed of the following ecclesiastical bodies: Greek Orthodox, Nestorian, Syrian Orthodox, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Armenian. The second major division of the Ancient Church is Roman Catholic. However, there are only a few Roman Catholics of the Latin rite in the Middle East. Certain groups have associated themselves with the Church of Rome at different times in history and are now known as Roman Catholic of the Eastern rite. These groups include the Maronite Church and the Uniate Churches (Chaldean, Greek Catholic, Coptic Catholic, Syrian Catholic, and Armenian Catholic). For a more detailed discussion of these church groups see R. Park Johnson's *Middle East Pilgrimage*, Friendship Press, New York, 1958. These representatives of the Ancient Church are to be commended for their steadfast endurance under the most difficult circumstances in a hostile

environment. They have given a witness by their very endurance. Yet, in most cases they have little or no evangelistic zeal left. My friends and I talked with representatives of the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Coptic churches. The Coptic priest with whom we talked manifested an evangelical spirit. He also gave very interesting answers to my questions concerning baptism. He said the Coptic Church, like the Greek Orthodox, baptizes infants and adults by a threefold immersion. That is, the person being baptized is put under the water three times: (1) in the name of the Father, (2) in the name of the Son, and (3) in the name of the Holy Spirit. However, he said the Coptic Church would receive a Presbyterian who had been baptized by sprinkling either in infancy or as an adult without re-baptism if the person was satisfied with his baptism.

Islam is the dominant faith in the Middle East except for Lebanon and Israel. Technically, Lebanon is a Christian nation according to the last census. These Christians are for the most part members of the ancient churches, not Protestants. There are some Protestants, however. It is very difficult for a Muslim to become a Christian and be baptized and received publicly into the Christian fellowship. This is notably true in Lebanon because religion and politics are tied together in a unique way. If the majority of the people are Christians, the president of the country must be a Christian and the premier a Muslim. On the other hand, if the majority of the people are Muslims, the president must be a Muslim and the premier a Christian. So to change one's religion is to change one's politics. From the Muslim point of view freedom includes the right of non-Muslims to become Muslims, but not the right of the Muslim to become a Christian. We were told by a missionary in a particular city of Lebanon that if a Muslim in his community should become a Christian by baptism, he would be killed immediately. This is by no means true everywhere in Lebanon or everywhere in the rest of the Muslim world, for some Muslims have and do become Christians. Nevertheless, Muslims claim the right to put to death a Muslim who has accepted another faith. Whenever a Muslim becomes a Christian, he suffers in many ways for his decision.

In Israel there are over a million and a half Jews, a considerable number of Muslims, and a few Christians. There are several denominations or sects within Islam. The orthodox group which includes about 80 percent of all Muslims is known as Sunnite. The largest of the heterodox groups is known as Shiite. The differences between these groups are very serious to the Muslims themselves. Most of the

people in Iran and about half in Iraq are Shiites. This is one of several factors which separate Iran from the Arab world. In spite of some positive values the Christian will recognize in Islam, he cannot avoid noticing its fatalistic outlook. Too, I feel it has been a factor in enslaving women, though its adherents claim this is not of the essence of Islam. Today certain changes are being made in the customs that have heretofore prevailed in this religion. In fact, there is even talk of a reformation within Islam. In some places Islam seems to be declining in strength and in others there is a renewed missionary activity. Some Muslims are finding it very difficult to adjust to the impact of present-day technology and industrialization. On the other hand, in Adana, Turkey, a young man studying to become a Muslim Mullah (teacher) told us that he wanted to go to the United States as a Muslim missionary with headquarters in Washington, D. C.

Protestant missionaries have been at work in the Middle East for about 150 years. We have a real investment there in money and life. In spite of many obstacles these devoted men and women have accomplished much. They have been pioneers in education, and education is one of the great needs of the people. The people recognize their need and are grateful for our help. Among the educational missionaries with whom we visited are Bill and Molly Hopper of Tehran, Iran, who are taking part in this World Mission Conference and are spending their furlough in Louisville, Kentucky. Bill is the son of the late Dr. W. H. Hopper and Mrs. Hopper of Louisville. Bill and Molly are U. S. Presbyterians working under the Board of the U.P., U.S.A. Church. When the Iranian government took over Alborz College, a Presbyterian institution, it took down the motto which had been placed over the entrance. This motto in Persian is now placed over the entrance to the school where Bill teaches: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Missionaries have pioneered in medical work, hospitals, nursing, and the treatment and care of lepers. This work is still being carried on vigorously. In Tripoli el-Mina, Lebanon, we saw Dr. Henry R. Boyes and his staff at work in the Kennedy Memorial Hospital. Dr. Boyes told us that every member of his staff was a Christian and that he held Bible classes for the staff regularly. In Kermanshah, Iran, we saw Drs. Russell Bussdicker and Frances Zoeckler and their colleagues at work in the Westminster Hospital. We saw the Rev. Robert Bucher at work in the Clinic of Hope in South Tehran, Iran. Here mothers and their babies are cared for by doctors and nurses. Food is sometimes provided for babies, and mothers are instructed in how to care

for their babies. As an evangelistic missionary Mr. Bucher follows up contacts he makes through the clinic. In Isfahan, Iran, we saw Dr. and Mrs. Eric Wild, British missionaries, at work. Dr. Wild not only does the general visitation in the hospital but also all the major surgery. He has performed as many as twenty operations in one day. In the evening he sometimes holds a communicant class for those who are preparing to make their profession of faith and unite with the Church. Someone once asked him, "Why is it that so many more of the emergency cases which are brought to you recover than those taken elsewhere for medical treatment?" Dr. Wild answered, "For one thing, we pray."

Missionaries have pioneered in relief work, including the care of orphan children. They have helped the people to farm scientifically and use their resources to better advantage. We stayed in the home of Edwin and Arpine Hanna in Jibrail, Lebanon, for a part of our time in Lebanon. Here Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Neal Alter and Edwin and Arpine with others were engaged in a mission work that combined several emphases: education of boys and girls, health and sanitation, leadership training, extension work, and evangelism. They were trying to apply the gospel to the life of the whole community. Among other things, they were teaching the people how to farm. In doing this they made use of rabbits, milch goats, chickens, and cows. During the recent fighting in Lebanon all the missionaries in Jibrail were forced to flee. All their belongings were taken and the mission property destroyed. The Hannas are working in Beirut and the Alters are on furlough in the States. We remember that Jesus not only taught and preached the gospel, but that he also healed the sick, cleansed the leper, and fed the hungry.

Missionaries have preached the gospel in deed and in word, and have won some converts in spite of the hostility in the environment. They have founded Protestant congregations and helped to revive some of the ancient churches. The Presbyterian Church, U.S., has only recently become officially involved in the missionary program of the Middle East. But now it is a part of the United Mission in Iraq. When we were in Iraq, one missionary told us that he was the only missionary in that particular part of the country, responsible for presenting the gospel to thousands of Muslims. He said: "Tell the people back home that we need many more missionaries and the money and equipment with which to do the work. A new opportunity for the cause of Christ in Iraq is opening up today. Many thoughtful Muslims are finding Islam inadequate. I hope this joint mission, which

the U.S. Church is now supporting, will not become everybody's business in such a way as to become nobody's business."

The Judgment of God

We need to look at the Middle East crisis in relation to the judgment of God. God has been at work in the Church of the Middle East; he has also been at work outside the Church and in the affairs of men and nations. He is at work today. The prophets of ancient Israel interpreted the crises of history as the judgments of God. There are two aspects of judgment, one positive and the other negative. God punishes sinful men and nations, and he works out his purpose of redemption at the same time. Amos speaking for God in the eighth century B.C. told his people: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities" (3:2). Jesus said in his day, "To whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required" (Luke 18:48). That is, the greater the opportunity, the greater the responsibility. This principle is applicable to both men and nations. We as Christians and as Americans have tremendous responsibility, for of the peoples in the modern world, we have been signally blessed. In the crisis of this hour God is warning us as he did Israel of old to meet the issues of our day with genuine commitment to his will. I fear that sometimes our idols of false security get in the way of our real trust in God. We must not substitute political manipulation for seeking the will of God. Expediency must not be allowed to take precedence over right. We must learn to help people because they are persons made in the image of God and for whom Christ died, not simply because it is to our advantage to do so. The love of Christ should control the Christian. We must not put things above people. Jesus said, "Of how much more value is a man than a sheep" (Matt. 12:12).

The Church as well as the nation stands under the judgment and mercy of God. The judgment of God is upon the Church for its divided witness. When we were in Jerusalem, Jordan, we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where tradition says Jesus was crucified. Inside we found altars of various ancient communions. I asked the man at the door, "Are you a Christian?" "No," he said, "I am a Muslim. The Christians had to get a Muslim to keep peace among themselves."

To some extent the Church is responsible for failing to deal adequately with anti-Semitism in Germany and the rest of Europe

through the centuries. (For those who have not already done so, I recommend that you read a history of the Jews written by a Jew, such as Solomon Grayzel's *A History of the Jews*, the Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1947. Such a reading is a very humbling as well as a very informative procedure.) If the Church had not failed in this respect, Hitler might never have made a scapegoat of the Jews of Europe. The Israeli-Arab controversy might never have arisen. If the United States in particular had opened its doors to many more Jewish refugees, this controversy might have been avoided. The prejudice in some of our churches at home toward minority groups may well be one of the switches that unleash the judgment of God upon us and our children. The condition of our inner space is far more important than our knowledge of outer space. It is the man with a pure heart who has the strength of ten.

Are we as Christian people really putting the Kingdom of God first? Do we know the meaning of personal sacrifice in order that others may hear the good news of Jesus and his love? To the best of my knowledge, all Christian groups together have only 1500 missionaries in the entire Middle East. Have we taken seriously what the Christian gospel has meant to us and to our country? I see hope for us in genuine repentance for specific sins and an acceptance of God's grace in faith that is committed to the will of God in Jesus Christ. God is longsuffering and kind but, if we persist in our sins, his judgment will not forever tarry.

What Shall We Do?

In the light of what has been said, what shall we do? I claim no omniscience in attempting to answer this question, but I have some very concrete suggestions. First, let us pray as never before. I do not mean say our prayers, I mean pray. This crisis through which we are passing is no laughing matter. It is far more serious than so many of our people realize. The temporary quieting of tension should not lull us into a false security. We are going through an internal and external crisis simultaneously, and the two are closely interrelated. When nations disintegrate within, they fall more easily from pressure from without. The various tendencies toward anarchy within our country today are eating at the very vitals of our democracy. If we permit these things to continue, we do so to our peril and the peril of many peoples who are looking to us to demonstrate the reality of true freedom. Communism is godless, and God will destroy it in his own time. When that time will be, I do not know. But, as God called his

Chosen People to repentance in the eighth and seventh centuries B. C. against the background of the threats from Assyria and Babylonia, so he is calling us to whom he has been so generous, to repentance against the background of the horrible threat of communism.

Let us place our security in God. I believe in carrying insurance and providing for old age, but I know that my only ultimate security does not lie in anything or anyone in this world. It rests with God alone. We need a faith that can stand no matter what happens, one that is persuaded that God works all things together for good to those who love him.

Let us bring up our sons and daughters in the home and in the Church in such a way that they may be confronted by the saving purpose of God and enabled to find that purpose as it relates to them. We must be willing for them to go as missionaries to the dangerous areas of the world. So far as that is concerned, all the world is dangerous; there is no hiding place down here. I am happy to report that one of the students who went with me to the Middle East, has heard God's call in the challenge of the Middle East and is planning to go as a missionary to that part of God's vineyard. The Board of World Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. is looking for someone to send as a missionary to Iraq right now. Perhaps one of you is the person whom God has chosen.

Let us learn what it means to give our money sacrificially for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Let us make Christ the Keeper of our pocketbooks. How many people have heard the gospel because we have sacrificed? How many have been prevented from hearing it because we have refused to sacrifice? For the most part we have never supported the missionary movement as if we believed in it with all our hearts and pocketbooks. There is a streak of selfish materialism running through the human race from one side of the globe to the other.

Let us encourage and participate in an informed understanding of the Middle East. Many excellent books are being produced on this subject at the present time. The Church will study the Middle East next year. A people informed and dedicated to the will of God are a power for God.

Let us encourage Christian laymen who are able to visit the mission fields of the Church to see what is happening and what is needed, that they in turn may encourage and inform the Church in its mission.

Let us as a Church definitely plan to raise up Christian citizens, some of whom may go to the Middle East as Christian business men, some as Christian government officials, and some as Christian missionaries. In reality all of these are Christian missionaries. We need to keep before our young people the great importance of Christian statesmen. We need more of them at home and abroad. And unless the Church raises them up, they will not be.

Through whatever channels are open to us, let us encourage our government officials to consult with missionaries from the Middle East concerning the issues involved there today. Some of this has been done. Much more ought to be done. The missionary goes to a country with the intention of spending his life there. He learns the language and comes to know the people from the inside out. He is in a position to be of inestimable value to our government. Some of you may know statesmen who can facilitate such consultations.

Finally, let us take to heart these words from Matthew 9:35-38:

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harrassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, pray therefore the LORD of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Suggested Readings

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